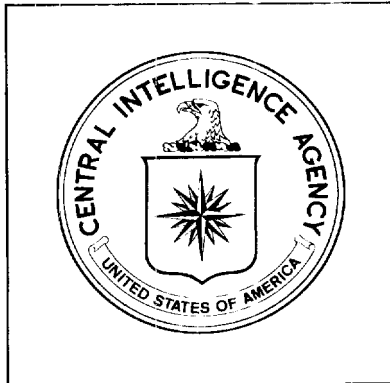


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SECRET SPOKE

MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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North Yemen

Assassination Plot

Disgruntled politicians who were dumped from their high level positions in recent months by North Yemeni strongman Colonel Ibrahim Hamdi reportedly are behind a plot to assassinate him on September 26 during Revolution Day ceremonies.

25X1C

[REDACTED] the plotters include Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, Lt. Colonel Mujahid Abu-Shuwarib--both of whom are in exile in Cairo--and Sheikh Abdallah al-Ahmar. Al-Ahmar and Abu-Luhum have been at odds in the past, but they might be willing to submerge their differences to overthrow Hamdi. Abu-Shuwarib is al-Ahmar's brother-in-law and has occasionally been linked politically with Abu Luhum. The Foreign Minister, when informed of the alleged plot, indicated that he was aware of the threat against Hamdi, and the government is taking precautions.

25X6

Hamdi moved against the Abu-Luhum clan last April [REDACTED] Sheikh Sinan from his provincial governor's post and two of his relatives from important military commands. They are from the country's second largest tribal group. Abu Shuwarib, former deputy army chief and Hamdi's one-time deputy on the ruling command council, fell from power in May. He lost much of his remaining influence when his supporters were purged from the army. Al-Ahmar is the head of the largest tribal confederation in North Yemen and was the speaker of the consultative assembly until it adjourned in July. His political strength has been largely neutralized by Hamdi's deft maneuvering.

Despite Hamdi's efforts to create his own civilian political organization, the direction of the government is still a one-man show. Hamdi's removal from the scene would bring political instability and a struggle for power among the country's disparate and often antagonistic religious sects and political and social groups. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Bangladesh

25X6

[REDACTED] after almost six weeks in power, the new Bangladesh government has done little to distinguish itself from the ousted regime of the late president Mujib. The new government has reaffirmed the four basic principles of Bangladesh's constitution--nationalism, secularism, socialism, and democracy--but has made virtually no other policy announcements.

Domestically, President Mushtaque's regime has imposed security measures as authoritarian as those of its predecessor. The country's ills have been blamed on Mujib's abuses of power, but no sweeping changes in his policies have been instituted. The few economic moves made by the new leaders, such as blocking the bank accounts of Mujib and his associates, have been politically motivated; some have been in line with precoup policies.

In foreign affairs, [REDACTED] the improved prospect for ties with Pakistan and China as a reaffirmation of Mujib's policy of friendship for all. Mujib himself had sought, albeit unsuccessfully, to improve relations with Pakistan and China to balance the influence in Bangladesh of India and the Soviet Union. The new government does not want its ties to Islamabad and Peking to grow to the extent that they sour Bangladesh's good relations with India and the Soviet Union, and it has made efforts to reassure these countries.

25X6

The government's slow pace may be a result of its preoccupation with political concerns such as sorting out leadership roles among civilian and military figures in the hierarchy and protecting itself against security threats. The relationship among President Mushtaque, the majors who led the coup, and senior military figures is still not clear.

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The post coup leadership struggle between the majors and some senior officers has subsided, but the younger officers have still not returned to their units. They are advising Mushtaque and in one case are reported to have overridden his decision. Mushtaque is aware of his uncertain position with the military and is paying careful attention to their concerns. He recently decided to review the cases of those arbitrarily removed from the military under Mujib; one of the principal coup plotters falls into this category.

Internal security seems to be the government's biggest concern. In addition to imposing tough martial law regulations, the government has rounded up some associates of Mujib, suspended political activity, launched a nation-wide campaign to confiscate illegally held arms, and absorbed into the army the Rakkhi Bahini, a paramilitary group set up by Mujib and believed loyal to him. The government's fears may have been compounded by persistent rumors that some of Mujib's supporters are seeking revenge for the coup.

25X6 [REDACTED] most Bengalees appear willing to acquiesce in the temporary suspension of rights and political activity, accepting that the government must set its house in order. Disenchantment, however, seems inevitable before long. Any government would find it difficult to consolidate its control over politically and economically troubled Bangladesh. The Mushtaque government, with its internal divisions and little of the massive popular appeal enjoyed by Mujib in his early days, may have an especially difficult time. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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